

Simmons backs measure to aid dairy farmers

WASHINGTON —

Legislation aimed at cutting the transportation costs of Connecticut's dairy farmers has been introduced to Congress by U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, R-2nd District.

Connecticut risks losing federal highway funds if it permits trucks in excess of 80,000 pounds to operate on its interstate highways, Simmons said. In the past, milk tankers entering Connecticut could off-load part of their loads to meet the 80,000-pound limit. However, recent health regulations now prevent the partial off-loading of milk.

Simmons said this puts Connecticut farmers at a disadvantage that amounts to \$3,150 per farm because more trucks are needed to haul the same amount of milk. More trucks make the roads less safe, he said.

The change is important now, Simmons said, because there is a bill to reauthorize federal transportation funding for the next six years is currently pending.

Simmons said one quarter of the land in eastern Connecticut is in use for agriculture.

Earlier this year, Simmons co-sponsored two bills, one to reauthorize the Northeastern Dairy Compact. The compact sets minimum wholesale prices for milk. He also supports a bill that would close the loophole in import law that floods American markets with foreign milk products, undercutting dairy farmers in eastern Connecticut.